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BIG MOVE TO MONETISE RENTAL HOUSING MARKET

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday cleared the Model Tenancy Act, which offers legal protection to both owners and tenants

STATES CAN ADAPT IT BY AMENDING LAWS

Under the Act, separate rent authorities, courts and tribunals will be set up in districts. House owners can seek a maximum two months' rent as security deposit from tenants, while it is six months' rent for commercial property. States and Union Territories can adapt the Act by enacting fresh legislation or amending their existing rental laws suitably

WILL UNLOCK OVER 1 CR VACANT HOUSES

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said there are 1.1 crore vacant houses available for rent in the country, according to the Census 2011
- The Act is expected to encourage owners to rent out their property without the fear that tenants won't vacate it later | P10, 12

Written

RENTAL AGREEMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO DISTRICT 'RENT AUTHORITY'

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

STRONG SC DOSE TO CENTRE

Calls vax policy prima facie arbitrary; seeks details on its evolution, including file notings

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

TERMING the Centre's vaccination policy as prima facie arbitrary and irrational, the Supreme Court in its written order sought all details on its formulation.

The court directed the Centre to place on record all relevant documents and file notings reflecting its thinking while evolving the policy, and the purchase history of Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V so far. It also asked all states and Union Territories to specify their stand on providing free jabs.

It saw a policy skew in allowing free vaccination for the vulnerable groups — those above 60 and the 45-plus with comorbidities — while enforcing a paid system for the rest. The order was part of the detailed hearing of Monday, which was made available on Wednesday.

Countering the Centre's pitch not to interfere in policy matters, particularly as the pandemic situation was dynamic, the bench led by Justice D Y Chandrachud said it does not intend to second-guess the wisdom of the Executive, but will determine "if the chosen policy conforms to the standards of reasonableness, militates against manifest arbitrariness and protects the right to life of all persons".

SHARP OBSERVATIONS BY THREE-MEMBER BENCH

APPEARS IRRATIONAL

Due to the importance of vaccinating individuals in the 18-44 age group, the policy for facilitating free vaccination for vulnerable groups under the first two phases, and replacing it with paid vaccination by state/UT governments and private hospitals for the 18-44 age group is, prima facie arbitrary and irrational. Under the liberalised vaccine policy that came into effect on May 1, the Centre is paying for the vaccines of the 60+ and people above the age of 45 with comorbidities. For the rest, the states can buy up to 50% of their vaccine requirements from manufacturers but they are paying a much higher price than the Centre. Private hospitals are paying even more.

ADDRESSING THE URBAN, RURAL DIGITAL DIVIDE

The court asked the Centre to provide data on the percentage of population that has been vaccinated with one or both doses, as against eligible persons in the first three phases of the vaccination drive. The data should include percentage of rural and urban population so far vaccinated.

VACCINE PRODUCTION RAMP-UP DOABLE?

While the Centre is confident of vaccinating everyone in the targeted age group by this December-end, the court sought full details as to how production of such high volume will be achieved. It also asked for an outline on how and when the Centre expects to vaccinate the remaining population.

PRICING, DATES OF PROCUREMENT

Regarding the pricing of vaccines, the bench asked the Centre to submit a cost comparison of the shots available in India as against their international price. "If ₹35,000 crore has been allocated for vaccine, why it cannot be used for vaccinating the 18-44 age group?" the court questioned and directed the Centre to produce the entire file on its vaccine purchase history till date. It also sought the dates of procurement orders of all vaccines — Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V — the number of doses ordered and the projected date of supply.

CAN'T BE SILENT SPECTATORS

The Indian Constitution does not envisage courts to be silent spectators when constitutional rights of citizens are infringed by executive policies. Judicial review and soliciting constitutional justification for policies formulated by the Executive is an essential function, which the courts are entrusted to perform, the bench observed. It said across the globe, the Executive has been given a wider margin in enacting measures, which ordinarily may have violated the liberty of individuals, but are now incumbent to curb the pandemic. P9

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa chairs a meeting, attended by ministers, to assess the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the State, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | EXPRESS

No dip in rural cases, may have to extend lockdown, hints CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA	JUNE 1	JUNE 2
Fresh cases	14,304	16,387
Recoveries	29,271	21,199
Deaths	464	463

CHIEF Minister BS Yediyurappa on Wednesday hinted at extending the lockdown currently in effect in Karnataka beyond June 7. Speaking to the media in Bengaluru, he said that Covid cases have not come under control in rural areas, compelling the government to consider extending the lockdown, though with some relaxations. He chaired a key meeting later on Wednesday evening where extending the lockdown by a week was discussed.

After the meeting, an addendum to the present Covid lockdown guidelines was issued, allowing export industries to function with 50 per cent of staff. Sources who attended the meeting suggested that while the lockdown is set to continue for another week, minor relaxations will be allowed. "Teleserial actors have requested that their shooting be allowed. They have assured the authorities that they will remain confined to resorts and enclosed spaces during shooting and adhere to Covid norms. The government is considering giving them permission. Small shops with one or two employees may be allowed to function," the sources said. Inter-district travel of passengers, however, is likely to remain suspended, but goods vehicles will be allowed as is currently.

The State is looking at bringing the positivity rate below 10 per cent before allowing any big relaxation of lockdown norms. Also, unlocking is expected to be in a phased manner over the next few weeks. An official announcement on extending the lockdown is expected either on Thursday or on Saturday as the chief minister is on a tour of Belagavi on Friday to monitor Covid situation.

Meanwhile, Urban Development Minister Byrati Basavaraj on Wednesday said that the lockdown should be extended till June 15, and he would convey his opinion to the chief minister. He said, "The decision on unlocking should be taken after June 15 and relaxation should be in a phased manner. There is a need to extend the lockdown as Covid cases are still high."

He asserted that there is a need to ensure that all groundwork is done and facilities are in place ahead of the third wave.

STATE ALLOWS 50% STAFF AT EXPORT UNITS

The State Government on Thursday issued an addendum to the existing lockdown guidelines to allow export industries to function, but with restrictions. 100% export-oriented units have been permitted to function with 50% staff, strictly adhering to Covid-appropriate behaviour. It also said all functioning industries employing over 1,000 persons should mandatorily conduct random Covid tests for at least 10% of their staff twice a week.

Shadow over Centre's 55-cr Covaxin target

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

THE Centre's ambitious target of having 55 crore doses of Covaxin by December appears hard to achieve as Mumbai-based Haffkine Biopharma, one of the three companies Bharat Biotech has roped in to ramp up Covid vaccine manufacturing, will not be able to start production before February next year. The company is looking at a time line of eight months to roll out the first batch of Covaxin, said Sandeep Rathod, managing director of Haffkine BioPharma, a Maharashtra government undertaking.

Sources told *TNIE* that a formal MoU between Bharat Biotech and Haffkine is still in the process of being signed.

Haffkine has received ₹64 crore grant from the Centre and ₹94 crore from the Maharashtra government for the vaccine production. According to a government release, production will take place at the Parel complex of the company, where a biosafety level 3 lab will be set up with a capacity to produce 22.8 crore doses of Covaxin.

The two other firms that Bharat Biotech has signed pacts with are central undertakings BIBCOL and Indian Immunologicals. CONTINUED ON: P10

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 1	JUNE 2
Fresh cases	1,27,510	1,32,788
Recoveries	2,55,287	2,31,456
Deaths	2,795	3,207

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
June 1 22,08,041 doses
June 2 22,45,112 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 22,08,62,440

CORONA INFECTS 39 CHILDREN IN HASSAN DISTRICT

A total of 39 children, aged below 15 years, are undergoing treatment at different Covid hospitals here, after testing positive in the last seven days. According to Dr Krishnamurthy, the in-charge district surgeon, seven children are being treated at the Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences (HIMS), the designated Covid hospital here. P6

Kerala gets 'KSRTC', K'taka loses case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru

AFTER the long drawn-out battle over intellectual property rights, the Kerala Road Transport Corporation has got the legal right to its trademarks -- acronym KSRTC, the logo of two elephants and the name Anavandi -- associated with the state-run transport corporation.

The Controller General of Patents Design and Trade Marks under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry approved Kerala's claim on Wednesday. The registration will make Kerala RTC the sole custodian of the trademarks. All buses of the corporation will display KSRTC with the mark to indicate the registration (R).

A senior officer from the Karnataka Transport Department said they are yet to receive official communication and they will be able to respond after receiving the copy of the order.

The Kerala RTC and Karnataka State Transport Corporation were fighting over the custody of the acronym 'KSRTC' for the last seven years. Even now, buses and websites of both RTCs use KSRTC. The decision is likely to end the confusion among passengers to know which one is the real KSRTC. CONTINUED ON: P5

SAFETY FOR ALL

Healthcare workers collect swab samples of inmates from Beggars' Colony at a primary health centre, as part of a BBMP drive to contain the pandemic, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | VINOD KUMAR T

K'taka plans to sell surplus power to firms, states

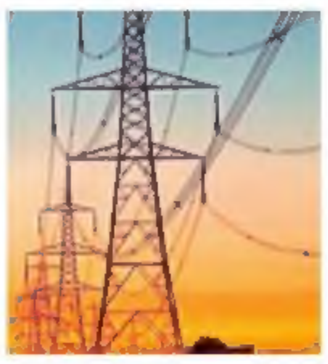
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA is likely to sell the surplus power it generates to other, needy states or companies by signing medium or long-term agreements.

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Wednesday directed Energy Department officials to take measures to sell surplus power. The officers will first determine the demand within the state, decide the quantum of surplus power, the duration of its availability and then look for buyers from within and outside the state.

The officers expect the availability of power to be substantial during monsoon. Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, G Kumar Naik said for the first time, the State is looking at selling surplus power on a long-term basis.

"We were preparing for an increase in demand by putting up thermal power stations. At the same time, a revolution occurred in the renewable energy space, and the State went about setting up solar power stations. Now, around 50 per cent of installed capacity and around 30 per cent of daily consumption is met by renewable energy sources. That is also one of the reasons why we seem to have surplus energy," he said. CONTINUED ON: P3



HOPEFUL TIMES

Good news on the job front: You're being hired

PEARL MARIA D'SOUZA
@ Bengaluru

HERE's some refreshing news on the job front when there is unemployment and loss of business all around, due to Covid. Hiring has resumed across sectors and cities, and eight out of 10 employers, who responded to a study, are actively offering jobs. Companies in the IT and technology sectors are leading the charge, a research by talent solutions provider, CareerNet, has found.

Hyderabad tops the list with 100 per cent of respondents saying they are actively hiring, while Benglauru is second with 80 per cent considering hiring. The numbers are expected to be higher in banking, e-commerce, insurance & financial services, and IT/ITeS as compared to other sectors.

Companies are giving preference to functional skills over soft skills as work processes are going online. There is a noticeable growth in demand for coders, programmers and software developers, and the reason for this is rapid adoption of digitisation by companies and growing consumption of technology during the pandemic. At least 69 per cent of recruiters are looking for tech-based talent, the study found.

While three out of four employers consider functional skills to be extremely important, less than half of them put soft skills in that basket. Among soft skills, communication is priority for 80 per cent of organisations, followed by interpersonal skills.

CareerNet, in its April 2021 study 'Present Hiring Outlook in India and the Future of Work', collected data from over 80 recruiters and over 1,600 working professionals from across sectors.

Nearly half of the organisations are considering hiring employees on contract and/or freelance basis this year, said Anshuman Das, CEO, CareerNet.

Pandemic, unemployment, poverty push 4 of family to suicide

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

COVID continues to claim lives, not just by infection, but also through lockdown-triggered unemployment, stigma and inability of families to bear the cost of treatment.

In the latest incident, four members of a family hanged themselves at H Mookahalli in Chamarajanagar on Wednesday. It is suspected that the unemployment and poverty might have forced them to take the extreme step.

Mahadevaswamy (55), a marginal farmer, his wife Mangalamma (40), daughters Geetha (15) and Sruthi (11) were found hanging at their house.

Mahadevaswamy tested positive on May 9 and was under home isolation. Other members of the family, though did not have symptoms, too were told to quarantine themselves by Asha workers.

Mahadevaswamy, who owned 1.5 acres of dry land and a milching cow, could not go out to work since Covid struck or sell milk at the local dairy. He was normally paid Rs 250 per day and even that meagre income had stopped, pushing the family to the brink.

Farmer Mahadevaswamy, his wife Mangalamma, and their daughters Geetha and Sruthi | EXPRESS

Even before Covid struck, Mahadevasamy had told the villagers that his family was living under a financially pathetic condition and he was finding it difficult to make ends meet. But never did he give a hint that he and his family would commit suicide.

The villagers called him an honourable man and pointed out that he paid back all the hand loans he had taken from neighbours on Tuesday morning. He also spoke over phone to his eldest daughter, who is married off to a village near Nanjangud, in the evening.

On Wednesday morning, one of the villagers knocked on Mahadevaswamy's door to call him for a day's job and found the family hanging.

Chamarajangar Rural police rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies for postmortem. The police said that they are conducting an investigation, and are looking at all angles, including ill-treatment of the family, if any, by other villagers.